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The CASE of the Election of Thetford in Norfolk.

THE Town of *Thetford* in the Counties of *Norfolk* and *Suffolk* appears to have had a Mayor, a Coroner, &c. as early as *Edward the First*; and have time out of mind sent Burgeses to Parliament. The choice of Burgeses to Parliament hath ever been in a select Number, even before the Charter of 16 *Eliz.* as well as ever since.

Writs being Issued for this present Parliament, the Corporation voluntarily agreed to chuse Sir *Joseph Williamson*, and Mr. *William De Grey*; and that Sir *Joseph Williamson* should have the first Vote, and Mr. *De Grey* the second.

Mr. *De Grey* was not satisfied unless he might have the first Vote, which the Corporation seemed not willing to.

In the mean time Mr. *Heveningham*, who was Mayor, insisted to be chosen himself for one; swearing to several Persons at several times, *That absolutely, do what they could, he would be one.*

At last it was discovered that Mr. *Heveningham* in order to have himself chosen for one, had form'd a Design of Raising the Floor (that is, the Inhabitants at large) to chuse.

In which Design (as he himself afterwards declared openly in his Speech to the People) the Friends of Mr. *De Grey* were also joyning.

The Corporation finding this, and Mr. *Heveningham* having himself declared, *That he heard there was a Design laid by some of Major De Grey's Friends to Raise the Floor; And that in case the Corporation would find some way of chusing him fairly, he would keep off the Floor; Otherwise that he was resolved to joyn with Major De Grey and the Floor, and to Ruine the Corporation: For he was Lock and Key to the Election, and could call it and break it up when he pleased.*

The Corporation to prevent this, and to preserve in themselves their Right of Election, came to a Resolution to chuse Mr. *Heveningham* in stead of Mr. *De Grey*; provided He (Mr. *Heveningham*) would promise to stand by their Choice, and keep off the Floor; which he most solemnly promised, and several times swore he would certainly do.

Upon this Agreement thus made with Mr. *Heveningham*, the Corporation proceeded to the Election, which passed thus, &c.

March 11. 1684. The Sheriff sent a Precept to the Mayor of *Thetford*, (Mr. *Heveningham*) to Elect Burgeses.

March 22. 1684. The Mayor gave solemn Notice of the Election to be the 26th of *March* following, to the Members of the select Body only, by sending his Officer to their several Houses.

March 25. 1685. The Mayor ordered the *Guild-Hall* (the constant place of Election) to be secured, to prevent the Floor breaking in to disturb the Election by the select Number, threatening to fill the Prisons with them in case they should attempt it.

March 26. The day of Election, { Sir *Joseph Williamson*,
Henry *Heveningham* Esq; Mayor, } stood Competitors for the said Burgeships.
Major *De Grey*,

The Body of the Corporation met in the Morning at the Mayors House, and attended him to the *Guild-Hall* in order to the Election; where finding several Persons not of the Body, he required them to depart, declaring they had nothing to do there, nor were concerned in the Election, which the Body had only Right to Vote in. And so having Locked the Doors, he himself read the Precept to the Body, and proceeded to take the Votes of the Members of the Body, (being all present except one) beginning as the constant custom hath been, with the Junior Members first, and so proceeding Man by Man to the Seniors; by which Poll it appeared,

Sir *Joseph Williamson* had all the Votes except the Mayors, being 29 in Number.

Mr. *Heveningham* had ——— 16 Votes.

Major *De Grey* had ——— 13 Votes.

Upon which the Mayor declared Sir *Joseph Williamson* and himself were chosen. But in stead of Sealing the Indentures of that Election, he proceeded and read a Paper, said to be given him by the Inhabitants at large, purporting a Petition to be admitted to give their Votes in the Election, and declaring it was reasonable they should be heard, he let them in himself, and (notwithstanding the Body opposed it, declaring the Election was already over) he stood up as soon as the Floor was entred, and though he had just before declared the Right of Election to be in the select Body, addressed himself to the Floor, or Inhabitants at large in a most formal Speech, applauding their Design of reviving their pretended Right, offering his Service to assist them in it, and by that means recommending himself to their choice for one. In which Speech among other passages, he expressly acknowledged, that for about 100 years or more, the Right of Election had continued in the Body or select Number, and that he himself was already chosen by the Body for one of their Burgeses.

No sooner was this Speech ended, then the Populacy cried up, *A Williamson, A De Grey; A Williamson, A De Grey*; to that degree that the Mayor standing up told them, *He could not but take it ill, that in all that cry he did not hear his own Name once named.*

Sir *Joseph Williamson* being Recorder of the Town, immediately stood up and protested against the said Procedure, declaring that by his Oath he was obliged to preserve the Antient Rights and Priviledges of the Corporation, and therefore could accept of no Election but by the Body, which the Mayor in his own Speech had owned to be the method of Electing for above 100 Years last past, as also that the Election was already over and himself chosen.

Upon this, the Mayor left the Court and together with 4 or 5 of the Body (without adjourning or dissolving the Court) went to the New-Hall and then proceeded to Poll the Inhabitants at large, for himself and Major *De Grey*, without ever reading the Precept to them, which indeed he had left behind him in the *Guild-Hall*.

Sir *Joseph* in the mean time continued with the Body in the *Guild-Hall*, where they proceeded to Seal his Indenture of Return Pursuant to his Election as aforesaid; which done, they carried the same to the Mayor, who refused to set the Common Seal thereunto or affix the same to the Precept, as he ought to have done.

After the pretended Election by the Populacy was over, the Mayor came down from his Seat, and chose one *Burage Martin* Esq; to be his Deputy, swore him as such, sent for his own Gown and put it upon his Deputy's Back, saying, *Now I have made you my Deputy, you must return me and Major De Grey.* And accordingly Mr. *Martin* signed the same as Deputy Mayor: But the Indentures were between the Mayor and the Sheriff.

The Mayor was present at and managed both Elections and took both the Polls in his own Person. Which appearing to the House, upon hearing of Council upon the Merits of the Return, he is removed, and the cause comes now to be heard only upon the Merits of Sir *Joseph Williamson's* Election.

Upon hearing whereof it is humbly hoped, if the Right of Election shall appear to have been alwayes in the Body, and that Sir *Joseph* was duely Elected by the Body; That in such Case (though the Mayor procured himself and Mr. *De Grey* to be afterwards unduely Elected by the Floor and returned, and that Return of himself since adjudged void by this Honourable House) it shall not be judged reasonable for Sir *Joseph* to be put to the Charge or trouble of a new Election, but that his Indenture shall be annexed to the Writ, and he recieved to sit according to the Justice of his Election.

And that the Election of Mr. *Heveningham* and Major *De Grey* by the Floor, or Inhabitants at large, shall be declared Null and Void.